

The Australian Journal of Clinical Hypnotherapy and Hypnosis



Volume 6 - Number 2 - September 1988

ISSN 0810-0713

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USING TRADITIONAL CHINESE MASSAGE TO FACILITATE CLINICAL HYPNOTHERAPY

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ABSTRACT

Traditional Chinese massage is, perhaps, the most effective form of "physical therapy" known today. Based on the principles of acupuncture, it may be applied to many disorders, as the sole form of therapy, with striking results. This paper discusses how this powerful system of "physical therapy":

- a. is drug-free and totally compatible with clinical hypnotherapy;
- b. operates with the same clinical "mind-set" as hypnotherapy;
- c. assumes that each patient has sufficient natural healing resources;
- d. allows therapists to deliver an even greater state of health to their patients than with hypnotherapy alone;
- e. increases the therapist's flexibility - by supporting both the therapy and the patient before, during and after a course of treatment; and
- f. can be used to deliberately create circumstances which represent the optimum therapeutic environment within which hypnotherapy can take place.

INTRODUCTION

It's common for physicians to pour scorn on the idea of traditional Chinese massage being "therapy". This is logical; as the only clinical use most physicians know for massage is that of facilitating drug therapy. They say traditional Chinese massage only works because of the "placebo effect"; arguing that the improvement in the condition of these (often very isolated) patients comes solely from their psychological response to the proximity of the masseur, rather than being due to the masseur's precise and logical sequence of physical and physiological manipulations.

There seems to be a widespread, general reluctance amongst hypnotherapists to use physical therapy. Apart from the situation where the notion has never occurred to them, this attitude is probably due to one of four things:

1. A feeling that physical therapy is somehow below their dignity.
2. Having no personal experience of physical therapy.
3. Having had previous bad experience with inadequate physical therapy, and, *on the basis of that experience*, they are unable to see any clinical application for it.
4. Although they have experienced effective physical therapy, they don't have the slightest idea of how to integrate it with their hypnotherapy.

Traditional Chinese massage is an integral part of the Chinese medical system. It combines the therapeutic knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine with the injury treatment strategies of Chinese martial art. Having much in common with acupuncture, it's a superb form of physical therapy which may be effectively applied to many disorders, as *the sole form of therapy*, with striking results. The masseur either follows the network of acupuncture meridians or uses individual "reflex points" for their therapeutic or rejuvenatory effect. The clinical success of veterinary acupuncture clearly demonstrates that the technology of traditional Chinese medicine operates regardless of patient expectation.

CREATING AN OPTIMUM THERAPEUTIC ENVIRONMENT

Both hypnotherapy and traditional Chinese massage are powerful, drug-free forms of therapy with extensive practical applications in the domain of *curative medicine*. However, due to their outstanding ability to reduce stress and actively promote a state of physiological excellence, their ideal application is in the domain of *preventive medicine*. Chinese medical tradition strongly advocates preventive medicine:

When medicinal therapy is initiated only after someone has fallen ill, when there is an attempt to restore order only after unrest has broken out, it is as though someone has waited to dig a well until he is already weak with thirst, or as if someone begins to forge a spear when the battle is underway. Is this not too late? (Unschuld, 1985).

Both forms of therapy depend on the natural and acquired skills of the therapist, and the "mind-set" required for each is remarkably similar. Each seeks to re-organize the patient's resources, and each implicitly assumes that every patient has *sufficient natural resources* within himself for the resolution of his problems. Unlike the case of drug therapy, you, as *the therapist*, have total control over the *non-patient input* into the therapeutic process. Drug therapy is totally incompatible with the "mind-set" of hypnotherapy and traditional Chinese massage, because of its implicit assumption that patients do not have sufficient natural healing resources. Ingested drugs are completely out of your

control; they provide *rectification in spite of the therapist*, with you becoming a "concerned spectator", rather than an "active participant".

The two therapies differ, however, in that traditional Chinese massage is a therapeutic system that firstly makes the physical, and then the attitudinal resources of the patient available to both therapist and patient; whilst hypnotherapy firstly makes the attitudinal, and then the physical resources available.

Long clinical experience shows that traditional Chinese massage is the most powerful of all the physical therapies; and, when compared with other forms of physical therapy, it achieves results of a *far greater magnitude* in a *far shorter time*. Patients report that traditional Chinese massage is amazingly gentle and, not only that its effects last a long time, but also that those effects continue to increase — even after the massage is long finished.

Traditional Chinese massage is the only drug-free tool widely available to hypnotherapists through which they can intentionally manipulate, and deliberately create circumstances which represent the *optimum therapeutic environment* within which their hypnotherapy can take place. This facilitates the delivery of the maximum amount of "help to the patient per unit hypnotherapy".

AN "INTELLECTUAL TECHNOLOGY"

Chinese Western medicine are two separate, extremely efficient systems of delivering health-care. Because of their intrinsic differences, each form of medicine has a different clinical attitude and health-care application.

Chinese medicine rose from a very different "mind-set", and it developed its own, idiosyncratic understanding of health, disease, and the human body. Chinese physicians seldom observed the same events as Western physicians; and, consequently, they seldom tried to describe or classify the same phenomena. The two were, therefore, co-existing, rather than contradictory medical paradigms. The Chinese never attempted to provide a collection of different therapeutic answers for precisely the same clinical questions asked by Western physicians. In contrast with Western medicine, traditional Chinese medicine is almost entirely an "intellectual technology"; it's really a "special way of thinking about things".

The Chinese saw a *different world*, they defined *different problems*, and they developed *specific clinical behaviour* to solve those different problems. Traditional Chinese medicine was expressed according to the logic of this unique, Chinese "mind-set", which involved considering the human body as if it were an organism, and treating all ailments on the basis of them being breakdowns of an appropriate homeostatic equilibrium.

Traditional Chinese medicine extensively used metaphor in its formal representations. For example, if you're asked: "What's the human brain like?" You might answer: "It's rather like a computer". However, when we come to deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), we're told it forms a *genetic "code"*.

We have no other way of understanding this aspect of DNA – because *what we actually know about DNA* has evolved from this “code metaphor.” So, we could say, DNA is the “code metaphor.” To make this point clearer: although we may model the human brain as a computer, we do have other ways of modelling it; e.g. as a telephone exchange, an orchestra conductor etc... Although we *can* think about the brain in very many different ways, the “code metaphor” of the DNA molecule is the *only thing* we know about DNA. It is not just *inseparable from* our understanding of what DNA is; it *is* our understanding of what DNA is.

Similarly, the empirical experience of the Chinese has done much to create, nurture and develop the unique metaphorical vehicles used to represent *that* experience. Those metaphors have a life of their own and, like the code metaphor for DNA, they’re *all that we know*. The Chinese system is essentially comprised of its metaphors. A precise understanding of these correct metaphors is the most important aspect of any study of Chinese medicine; because all of the different modalities of traditional Chinese medicine (pharmacy, manipulative therapy, etc.) use the same models and specialized jargon terms in exactly the same way.

A given set of phenomena can be sorted out in many different ways; and we can model anything in any way we choose. For example, no matter how much we argue about what hypnosis might or might not be, we’ll all agree to a considerable extent on what hypnosis can or cannot do.

Thomas Kuhn (1977) tells us that events, or phenomena, only become “data” when viewed with a particular “mind-set”, or “paradigm”. Kuhn also argues that “real world events” can only be reconstructed from the “data” offered, if *that* “data” is examined through the agency of the original “mind-set”. For instance, the index of a book only has a value when it’s connected to that particular book; it has no other value whatsoever, and may even be *dangerously misleading*, if it were to be joined to an entirely different book.

The Chinese system must, therefore, be understood exactly as it is: a *relational metaphorical system*.

PAVING THE WAY TO SUCCESSFUL CLINICAL BEHAVIOUR

As Western scientific knowledge currently stands, there’s no systematic way of manipulating its structural, absolute terms to allow it to describe a relational, qualitative system. We’re led to believe that Western science tells us things *exactly as they are* (q.v. Jones (1983) *passim*); and we’re all trained to expect explanations.

Western “structural” science asserts that, if something works, there must always be some kind of “factual explanation” possible. It can never be satisfied with a set of metaphors that produce correct actions. Consequently, most Western people fail to understand that “acupuncture points” and “acupuncture meridians” have no substantial reality; they don’t realize that they’re nothing more than “a way of thinking about things”. Although we *can* demonstrate measurable

differences in electrical activity at the sites of known acupuncture points, there are not biological correlates for those points; the concept of an “acupuncture point” is simply a metaphor designed to pave the way to successful clinical behaviour.

Although the Chinese never provided *systematic explanations*, they certainly *systematically represented*, and sorted out isolated pieces of empirically determined phenomena with their various kinds of metaphor. Chinese science represented things as they were known to work. In other words, the Chinese were concerned with *orthopraxies* (correct action), rather than *orthodoxy* (correct theory).

For example, the Chinese represented the workings of the human body through the metaphorical vehicle of the Chinese Imperial bureaucracy. They represented their empirical observations of the physiological responses to direct, external physical stimulation at certain points on the surface of the body with the Chinese system of rivers, streams, lakes – and special caves (which permitted access to these hydraulic systems). Many of their representations were derived from Chinese philosophical systems, such as Yin-Yang, and the Five Phases, etc.

The degree to which you can successfully use traditional Chinese medical technology depends on the degree to which you have the right “thread of meaning” passing through the (otherwise) random pieces of “data” offered by the Chinese. To reproduce correct clinical behaviour from the transmitted information you must use the original “mind-set”, and understand the appropriate metaphors – according to the values of the representational system of those who constructed them.

When compared with less productive systems of therapy, it’s obvious that a more productive system will always bring better clinical results – in terms of *scope*, *duration*, and *magnitude*. Your traditional Chinese massage will always be the most clinically productive when you manipulate your patient’s body in a way that’s consistent with the intention of the original Chinese metaphor – which, of course, was expressly designed to deliver that correct clinical behaviour!

TIAO: “BEING IN TUNE”

The general purpose of traditional Chinese massage is to manipulate acupuncture points and their connecting meridians, with the intention of re-ordering the patient’s resources; this is known as *Tiao*. Tiao is not “balancing” – even though this translation often appears in the English language literature – because embedded with the word “balance” is the inappropriate notion of a *static equilibrium* reached between a pair of entities of equal weight. The Chinese term Tiao, when used as a verb, labels the dynamic process through which an instrument being in tune, when used as a noun, labels the state of an instrument being in tune.

A homeostatic equilibrium, suitable to their chosen environment, was considered to be the natural condition of all humans. In this state, not only was each physiological component “tuned” and “harmonious” within itself, but each of these “tuned” components played its own specialized role in adjusting the entire organism to the demands of the

organism's chosen environment – by impelling correct giving, proper taking, and appropriate interactive support amongst all its constituent components.

Illness was considered to be a disruption of homeostasis. Disease was "dis-ease". Disorders were the consequence of an "absence of appropriate order". Although millions of things impinge on us each moment of each day, illness only occurs when, for one reason or another, we're no longer able to cope with one or more of those stimuli.

The primary therapeutic strategy of traditional Chinese medicine was one of *conciliation*, rather than conflict. A patient's resources were rearranged so that the physiological impact of stressful stimuli was diminished. The subtlety of therapies were delivered, as early as possible, to the patient's whole organism; rather than making attempts to treat the affected part in total isolation – or adding further medical resources to an already disordered patient.

Stressful stimuli were removed from the patient's environment. Patients were taught about circumstances that might precipitate, or predispose them to a specific disorder. This placed responsibility on patients in terms of their diet, way of life, and personal hygiene, and required them to learn to recognize conditions that were incipient disorders. It also discouraged them from becoming dependent on either the therapist or his technology.

"CRITICAL MASS"

Traditional Chinese medicine had no need to establish *cause and effect* relationships. It did not indulge in the fallacious *post hoc ergo propter hoc* reasoning we so often find in Western medicine: which supposes that two sequential events have a causal connection – rather than, at best, a high degree of positive correlation.

The Chinese concept of "critical mass" is different from "multi-factorial aetiology"; and it's also quite different from "proved causation".

If, for example, under experimental conditions, aspirin is given to a known asthmatic patient, and an asthmatic episode follows, we can certainly say that the ingestion of aspirin has *caused* the asthma. It's common knowledge amongst practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine that, if bananas are removed from the diet of an asthmatic, the frequency of asthmatic episodes will be considerably reduced. This does not demonstrate that bananas *cause* asthma. At best, it shows that bananas contribute to an environment that predisposes a patient to an asthmatic episode. In other words, they contribute to the "critical mass" of asthma. So, rather than describing asthma as a "worse through aspirin" disorder, the Chinese prefer to describe it as a "better through removing bananas" disorder.

The Chinese also say that if we look, in a "proper way", at things such as lumbago, tropical ulcers, oedema, or leucorrhoea, they are "damp disorders": much the same as you having a damp, and waterlogged carpet.

The Chinese technical literature describes the therapeutic action of each modality and materia medica in terms of its *functional capacity* to

qualitatively after the metaphorical pattern manifested by a disordered patient, e.g. "drying the dampness", "cooling the heat" etc... This had the decided advantage that the therapist's "real world knowledge" of the nature of the "real world vehicle" of the *chosen metaphor* facilitated correct treatment.

For example, if your hot water service broke and flooded your carpet, you'd immediately turn off the water and dry the carpet, wouldn't you?

Similarly, your treatment for lumbago might involve "turning off the water" by removing "damp things" from the patient's diet such as fruit and cool drinks, making sure his environment was less damp by stopping him wearing wet or sweaty clothes, encouraging him to keep his lower back dry, and then using massage to increase the circulation in the area: all of which would reduce the "critical mass" of the "dampness". You might then use cupping to remove the "dampness" directly from his lower back – just the same as you might use a vacuum cleaner on your carpet – and, if necessary, herbal medicines might also be used to help "dry the dampness".

THE NEED TO SUPPORT CLINICAL HYPNOTHERAPY

It is most common to find clinical hypnotherapy delivered within the framework of initial training in self hypnosis and an "ego-strengthening" session following the hypnotherapy. This is strong evidence of an implicit assumption being made by hypnotherapists that their hypnotherapy, in itself, is not enough.

To draw a parallel with surgery, in the same way that *the scalpel* is the instrument of surgery, *hypnosis* is the instrument of hypnotherapy. The surgeon works to organize, re-connect and motivate the patient's physical resources; the hypnotherapist works to organize, re-connect and motivate the patient's intellectual resources. In both cases, the degree to which the patient gets better is solely due to the degree to which the patient motivates his own resources, whether consciously or not.

Patients are carefully prepared physically, emotionally and intellectually for surgery; and, even in the midst of this most important area of critical medicine, there's still a constant need for things such as sanitation, hygiene, good nourishment, assistance with recovery, rehabilitation, and convalescence to ensure clinical success.

All good hypnotherapists possess a special talent; and, if their therapy doesn't produce excellent results, it's seldom their hypnotherapy that is at fault. It's far more likely they haven't been supporting their hypnotherapy properly. They've probably been relying solely on hypnotherapy for their clinical success; rather than preserving it for use as the *principal jewel in their therapeutic crown*.

STRESS

In many circumstances our patients are highly stressed and, unfortunately, hypnotherapists are often seen as providing, at least chronologically, "last resort therapy". Patients are often upset by the fact that prior treatment has diminished the level of control they have

over their life, and its side effects have significantly reduced their quality of life.

Once it seems that change is impossible, patients think any effort whatsoever is futile and that, for them, a better outcome is beyond all hope. Anything a therapist does to improve their quality of life and provide them with feelings of optimism and resourcefulness is of great value. Taking steps to involve them in the therapeutic process (e.g., by teaching self-hypnosis) brings a sense of increased control over their life and their treatment. Hippocrates argues:

There are three factors in the practice of medicine: the disease, the patient and the physician. The physician is the servant of the science, and the patient must do what he can to fight the disease with the assistance of the physician. (Chadwick & Mann 1978).

We're stressed whenever the demands of a situation either taxes or exceeds what we consider to be our ability. The nature of the "real world situation" is irrelevant. The problem rises from our conclusion that there's a large difference between magnitude of the situation, and the magnitude of our "coping resources". It's our subjective appraisal of our resources and competence – not their "real-world", true value – which determines whether we consider a certain situation stressful.

Stress is a product of ourselves; not a product of our surroundings. It's the way we react to stress which gives stress its particular subjective value. Stress can't cause painful intestines; it can't cause asthma. It's how each of us consciously and unconsciously decides to deal with stress that's the difficulty.

Many patients don't see stress as an issue. They'll say they're quite OK – except they have a headache just at the moment – but that's just due to stress. It's as if, to them, having a headache due to stress is somehow different from having a headache due to menstruation, drinking too much beer, or sitting too long in the sun.

Stress can also be defined as a set of circumstances in which an individual is in a sustained state of inappropriately high arousal. It's the beginning stage of most serious mental disorders, and a major factor in serious physical disorders such as heart attacks, stomach ulcers, cancers etc. Because of this, the prompt, early and efficient treatment of any stress condition is critical. The outstanding characteristic of episodes of stress is that, regardless of how they arise, they're all rather similar, and quite amenable to much the same therapeutic approach. They must be treated while they're functional disorders, and before they've become structural disorders.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

The more we reduce stress and tension prior to hypnotherapy, the more likely our subsequent hypnotherapy will be successful.

Until you have a powerful, compatible, drug-free method of tending your patient before, during and after a course of hypnotherapy, your results will be far less comprehensive, and far more likely to be

temporary. Traditional Chinese massage, because of its compatibility with hypnotherapy, not only supports your hypnotherapy, but also allows you to continue your treatment programme with precisely the same "mind-set".

If the hypnotherapist performs the massage himself, he's able to monitor the patient's condition in a very different way from his usual "pre-hypnotherapy" assessment. Masseurs ask different questions from hypnotherapists; and the answers received always provide additional, valuable insights which transform subsequent hypnotherapy. It's also significant that this extremely important and different information – which is of so much clinical value to the hypnotherapist – is not distorted through the agency of a third person.

The author's experience as a therapist (viz. someone working to create circumstances in which patients take an ever increasing role in handling their own condition) shows that, although the other modalities of hypnotherapy, osteopathy, acupuncture, and herbal medicine are available to him, there's nothing superior to traditional Chinese massage for the initial treatment of stressed patients.

PROMOTING MORE PRODUCTIVE HYPNOTHERAPY

A traditional Chinese massage leaves an individual totally relaxed, with his internal resources re-ordered, and with a significantly reduced level of arousal. If increased arousal brings increased muscle tension, then decreased muscle tension must send a message to his brain that all's well; thus lowering the level of arousal. This reduces fear and apprehension; giving each patient a direct experience of feeling safe. This safe feeling can then be amplified during a course of hypnotherapy. Experience shows that no successful examination of any frightening event (phobias, panic attacks, etc.) is possible until patients have some place in which they feel quite safe.

Because patients present for "physical therapy", they have very little expectation in the domain of "physical therapy affecting their intellect". From experience, we know that traditional Chinese massage is a strong and powerful therapeutic tool. Our patients don't, so, if a patient feels better, nothing can excuse away the fact that the patient does feel, in all senses of the word, better.

If there's a combined hypnotherapy and traditional Chinese massage course of treatment, the patient will never know how much to expect from each separate therapeutic segment. By using this allied modality, there won't be so much depending on a single episode of hypnotherapy and, thankfully, we'll no longer hear so much therapist talk of "patient resistance". A session of hypnotherapy will become part of an ongoing therapeutic programme; rather than being an isolated and challenging "crash through, or crash" confrontation.

It is important to note, however, this isn't arguing a case for "simultaneous massage and hypnotherapy" because, in the author's opinion, giving a patient traditional Chinese massage and hypnotherapy simultaneously provides too much scope for misunderstanding.

The empirical knowledge of how the traditional Chinese massage techniques can be specifically directed towards reducing muscle tension, increasing physical flexibility, promoting physiological excellence, and influencing intellectual states in a *predictable fashion*, is what makes it such a powerful tool for the hypnotherapist. It can be used, within the overall therapeutic process, to:

- a. add something that's missing, or
- b. amplify something (desirable) that's already present, or
- c. reduce something (undesirable) that's already present.

Thus, more of the patient's resources will be made available to both patient and therapist – in a way that requires no effort from the patient. There'll be far more "patient compliance", and far less strain on the intellect of an already stressed patient. Potential competition between the patient and the therapist (or therapist's) own expectations of the patient's performance will disappear.

During a massage, the patient can monitor the therapist's performance and, *by extrapolation into the projected hypnotherapy*, become more confident in the outcome of hypnotherapy. This is a parallel with the "coupling" of the feeling of the chair under a patient's palm with an increase in relaxation; viz. "In the same way that you feel better with a traditional Chinese massage, you're going to feel better and better with hypnotherapy".

Many first time patients are worried about the prospect of hypnotherapy. The calmness they experience following a traditional Chinese massage certainly provides them with a substantial experience upon which they can model future "relaxed behaviour". This physical "mock-up" of relaxed behaviour is invaluable with patients whose negative self-talk tells them they lack imagination. They now have something to reproduce and, therefore, will be easily able to co-operate with the therapist.

From the author's clinical experience, most patients who initially present for "massage only" turn out to be excellent hypnotic subjects. Perhaps this observation is supported by the high proportion of "tactile" language in the "hypnotherapy scripts" found in texts such as Hartland (1971).

ENHANCEMENT OF "RIGHT BRAIN" ACTIVITY

Traditional Chinese massage can re-order and co-ordinate the patient's internal resources in such a way that his "right brain" activity is enhanced.

The confusion of most stressed patients is often amplified by the fact that they've lost their ability to be decisive. Decisions are made on the basis of comparisons between the relative values of each pertinent factor – within the context of the problem at hand. Because an individual's understanding of each factor's relative importance is stored in the "right brain" (in the form of an hierarchical set of "relational value ratings"), anything which can promote "right brain" activity will do much to increase decisiveness.

Also, and perhaps even more importantly, with their "right brain" properly motivated, they'll be far more receptive to the styles of hypnotherapy that actively harness creative thought, employ metaphor, and encourage the re-patterning of ideas.

CONCLUSION

We must stop looking at hypnotherapy as the sole agent of therapy. We must think of it more as an extremely powerful therapeutic tool – something like surgery.

Traditional Chinese massage provides the clinical hypnotherapist with a compatible, and powerful therapeutic vehicle with which he can further integrate a patient's mental and physical states in an "holistic therapy". Traditional Chinese massage also permits hypnotherapists to provide an even greater state of health to their patients, than with hypnotherapy alone.

This paper isn't advocating that you "extend your product range", by adding another therapeutic modality to your "bag of tricks" (viz. traditional Chinese massage), in order to make yourself more commercially attractive. It is that, by having a different and *compatible* way of thinking about clinical problems, you'll be better able to handle situations that rise during hypnotherapy. Whereas, the study of another, unconnected discipline (e.g. chiropractic) *might* significantly increase your range of therapeutic options, it will do almost nothing to help your clinical hypnotherapy.

There's much to commend the use of traditional Chinese massage to the hypnotherapist. It can support our patients, before, during and after hypnotherapy. It can also be used to deliberately create the physical and intellectual circumstances which represent the *optimum therapeutic environment* within which hypnotherapy can take place.

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